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# Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1993

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Shay Bilchik, Administrator

July 1996

## JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

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# Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1993

Jeffrey A. Butts, Ph.D.

Juvenile courts in the United States processed an estimated 1.5 million delinquency cases in 1993. This number represented a 2% increase over the 1992 caseload and a 23% increase over the number of cases handled in 1989. More than half (53%) of the delinquency cases disposed by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction in 1993 were processed formally (that is, a petition was filed charging the youth with delinquency). Of the cases that were formally petitioned and scheduled for adjudicatory or waiver hearings in juvenile court, 58% were adjudicated delinquent, and slightly more than 1% were transferred to adult criminal court. Transfers to criminal court were more common in cases involving person offenses (2.7%) and drug offenses (2.2%). Of all delinquency cases adjudicated in juvenile court in 1993, 28% resulted in out-of-home placement and 56% were placed on probation.

These statistics are among the findings to be published in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*, the latest in a series of annual reports on cases handled by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Although courts with juvenile jurisdiction handle a variety of cases, including abuse, neglect, adoption, and traffic violations, *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports focus on the disposition of delinquency cases and formally handled status offense cases. Each report includes national estimates of the number of cases handled by juvenile courts with an appendix that lists caseload statistics for

individual States and jurisdictions within each State.

Findings from *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993* include:

- The number of criminal homicide cases handled in U.S. juvenile courts increased 13% between 1992 and 1993. The 1993 homicide caseload was 45% higher than the caseload of 1989.
- The number of cases involving offenses against persons increased 6% between 1992 and 1993, while the number of property offense cases decreased 3%.
- Statistics for the period between 1992 and 1993 showed a decrease in the number of cases involving several offense categories: burglary (-4%), larceny-theft (-2%), and motor vehicle theft (-14%).
- In 21% of delinquency cases processed in 1993, the most serious charge was a person offense; in 54%, a property offense; in 6%, a drug law violation; and in 18%, a public order offense.
- The number of delinquency cases involving female juveniles increased 31% between 1989 and 1993, while cases involving males increased 21%.
- Juveniles were held in secure detention facilities at some point between referral and disposition in 20% of all delinquency cases disposed in 1993.
- The number of juvenile court cases transferred to criminal court grew 10%

### From the Administrator

From 1989 to 1993, the number of delinquency cases handled by America's juvenile courts rose 23 percent. This Bulletin profiles the estimated 1.5 million cases processed by these courts in 1993.

*Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1993* summarizes the findings of *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*, the latest in a series of reports analyzing data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Data in the Archive are maintained and analyzed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.

The report's 1993 estimates of juvenile court cases are derived from data from more than 1,800 juvenile courts that have jurisdiction over 67 percent of the U.S. juvenile population.

The Bulletin, as the larger report on which it is based, is a general reference document for juvenile justice professionals in law enforcement, the courts, and corrections. It is my hope that it provides a context in which to view the growth of juvenile offending and its impact on our communities, families, and young people.

Shay Bilchik  
Administrator

between 1992 and 1993. In contrast to previous years when property offenses were predominant among transferred cases, the largest group of transferred cases in 1993 involved person offenses—5,000 of the 11,800 cases transferred nationwide.

These 1993 national estimates of juvenile court cases are based on data from more than 1,800 courts that had jurisdiction over 67% of the U.S. juvenile population in 1993.<sup>1</sup> A case disposed during the calendar year by a court with juvenile jurisdiction represents the unit of count in this study and in each *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. It is possible for an individual youth to have been involved in more than one case during the calendar year. Each case represents a youth processed by a juvenile court on a new referral, regardless of the number of individual offenses contained in that referral. The reports categorize cases involving multiple offenses according to the most serious offense. For example, a case involving both a charge of vandalism and a charge of robbery would be characterized as a robbery case. Similarly, cases involving multiple dispositions are categorized according to the most restrictive disposition. In a case that resulted in both probation and placement in a residential facility, disposition would be coded as residential placement.

## Delinquency Cases

Delinquency offenses are acts committed by a juvenile that if committed by an adult could result in criminal prosecution. Juvenile courts handled an estimated 1,489,700 delinquency cases in 1993 (Table 1). A property offense was the most serious charge involved in 54% of these cases. The most serious charge was a person offense in 21% of the cases, a drug offense in 6%, and a public order offense in 18%. Larceny-theft, simple assault, burglary, and vandalism were the most common offenses in juvenile delinquency cases in 1993. Together, these four offenses made up more than half of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts during 1993.

## Number of Cases

Between 1989 and 1993, the total number of delinquency cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts increased 23%. The largest relative percentage increases occurred in cases involving weapons offenses (87%), violent sex offenses

**Table 1: Delinquency Cases by Offense, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change	
	1989	1993	1989–93	1992–93
<b>Total Delinquency</b>	<b>1,211,900</b>	<b>1,489,700</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Person</b>	<b>209,100</b>	<b>318,800</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>6</b>
Criminal Homicide	1,900	2,800	45	13
Forcible Rape	4,100	6,100	48	12
Robbery	22,800	35,600	56	5
Aggravated Assault	48,800	77,500	59	1
Simple Assault	110,400	166,400	51	10
Other Violent Sex Offenses	6,700	10,900	64	10
Other Person Offenses	14,300	19,400	35	-10
<b>Property</b>	<b>705,100</b>	<b>808,900</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>-3</b>
Burglary	131,400	149,700	14	-4
Larceny-Theft	318,500	353,700	11	-2
Motor Vehicle Theft	67,900	61,100	-10	-14
Arson	6,700	8,200	21	0
Vandalism	82,900	117,100	41	0
Trespassing	49,700	60,500	22	5
Stolen Property Offenses	23,700	27,400	16	-7
Other Property Offenses	24,200	31,300	29	-12
<b>Drug Law Violations</b>	<b>78,000</b>	<b>89,100</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Public Order</b>	<b>219,700</b>	<b>272,800</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>
Obstruction of Justice	82,000	96,000	17	12
Disorderly Conduct	47,800	71,200	49	4
Weapons Offenses	25,200	47,200	87	16
Liquor Law Violations	15,800	13,200	-16	3
Nonviolent Sex Offenses	12,300	10,900	-11	-13
Other Public Order	36,700	34,400	-6	8
<b>Violent Crime Index *</b>	<b>77,700</b>	<b>122,000</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Property Crime Index **</b>	<b>524,600</b>	<b>572,600</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-4</b>

\* Violent Crime Index includes criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

\*\* Property Crime Index includes burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

(excluding rape, 64%), aggravated assault (59%), and robbery (56%).

## Case Rates

To examine changes in juvenile court caseloads while controlling for the size of the juvenile population, researchers determined a case rate that represents the number of delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts for every 1,000 youth at risk of referral to a juvenile court.<sup>2</sup> Between 1989 and 1993, the national delinquency case rate increased 14%, from 47.8 to 54.6 cases disposed per 1,000 youth at risk (Table 2). During the same time period, the case rate for juveniles charged with person offenses increased 42%, as drug offenses increased 6%,

property offenses grew 7%, and public order offenses increased 15%.

## Age of Youth

Of all delinquency cases processed by the Nation's juvenile courts in 1993, 61% involved a juvenile under age 16. These younger youth were involved in 64% of person offense cases, 64% of property offense cases, 42% of drug law violation cases, and 54% of public order offense cases. Compared to caseloads of older juveniles, the caseloads of younger youth involved a smaller proportion of drug law violations (4% compared with 9%) and public order offenses (16% compared with 21%), but somewhat larger proportions of person offenses and property offenses (Table 3).<sup>3</sup>



**Table 2: Percent Change in Delinquency Case Rates, 1989–1993**

Offense	Case Rates		Percent Change
	1989	1993	
<b>Delinquency</b>	47.8	54.6	14%
Person	8.2	11.7	42
Property	27.8	29.7	7
Drugs	3.1	3.3	6
Public Order	8.7	10.0	15

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk.

Note: Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

**Table 3: Offense Profile of Delinquency Cases by Age at Referral, 1993**

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Person	22%	20%
Property	57	50
Drugs	4	9
Public Order	16	21
Total	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Delinquency case rates generally increase with age (Figure 1). For example, the delinquency case rate for 15-year-olds in 1993 was 31% higher than the rate for 14-year-olds (92.8 compared with 70.7 per 1,000 youth, respectively), and the case rate for 16-year-olds (106.6 per 1,000 youth) was 15% greater than that for 15-year-olds. The exception to this pattern is the case rate for 17-year-olds (105.1 per 1,000), which was slightly lower than the rate for 16-year-olds.

### Gender of Youth

The number of 1993 delinquency cases involving males was far greater than the number involving females. Juvenile courts disposed almost 1.2 million delinquency cases involving males, compared with 297,400 cases involving females (Table 4). Still, the number of delinquency cases involving females increased 31% between 1989 and 1993, while cases involving males increased 21%. The relative increase in the number of cases involving females was most apparent in property offense cases (up 25% for females, versus 12% for males) and person offense cases (up 68% among females, compared with 49% among males).

Between 1989 and 1993, the delinquency case rate for males increased 13% (from 75.7 to 85.2 cases per 1,000 youth). Among female juveniles, the delinquency case rate grew 21% (from 18.4 to 22.4 cases per 1,000). The person offense case rate for females was 56% higher in 1993 than in 1989, while the person offense case rate for males grew 38%. However, the 1993 person offense case rate for males was still more than three times greater than the corresponding rate for females.

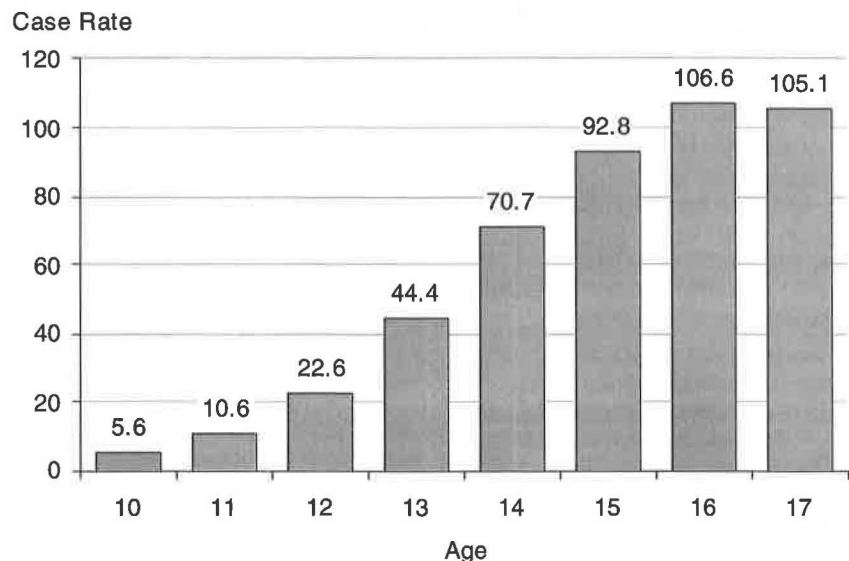
### Race of Youth

Between 1989 and 1993, the number of delinquency cases involving white youth increased 18%, and the number of cases involving black youth and youth of other races increased 34% and 32%, respectively (Table 5).<sup>4</sup> In 1993 the number of delinquency cases involving white youth exceeded the number involving black youth by a margin of 2 to 1. Cases involving whites outnumbered those involving youth of other races by 18 to 1. The delinquency case rate for black youth, however, was more than twice the rate for white youth (115.4 compared with 44.1 per 1,000 youth).

In 1993 the person offense case rate for black youth was more than three times

greater than the corresponding rate for white youth. The drug offense case rate for black youth was nearly four times the rate for whites. Similarly, the property and public order offense case rates for blacks were more than double the rates for whites. In all offense categories, the case rate for juveniles of other races was lower than the corresponding rates for either black or white juveniles.

Property offense cases accounted for 58% of all 1993 delinquency cases involving white youth, 46% of those involving black youth, and 63% of those involving youth of other races. The black caseload involved a slightly higher proportion of person offense cases (27%) than either the white (19%) or other race caseloads

**Figure 1: Delinquency Case Rates by Age at Referral, 1993**

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth in age group.

(18%). Drug law violations accounted for a larger proportion of delinquency cases involving black youth (8%) than did cases involving white youth (5%) or youth of other races (4%).

### Source of Referral

A number of sources—law enforcement agencies, social services, schools, parents, probation officers, and victims—refer delinquency cases to juvenile courts. Although there were variations according to offense categories, 86% of all 1993 delinquency case referrals made to juvenile courts were by a law enforcement agency (Table 6). Law enforcement agencies referred 86% of person offense cases, 91% of property offense cases, 94% of drug law violation cases, and 70% of public order offense cases.

### Use of Detention

On occasion, juveniles are held in secure detention facilities before adjudication and disposition. Detention may be necessary for a number of reasons, including protecting the community, protecting the juvenile, ensuring the youth's appearance at scheduled hearings, or allowing for evaluation. Juveniles were detained in 20% of the delinquency cases disposed in 1993. Nearly half of these cases involved juveniles charged with property offenses (Table 7).

The number of delinquency cases involving detention increased 19% between 1989 and 1993. The number of person offense cases involving detention increased 42%, property offense cases increased 14%, and public order offense cases grew 17%. In contrast, the number of drug offense cases involving detention decreased 3% between 1989 and 1993. This 5-year drop in detention for drug cases, however, obscures a recent increase. Although the number of drug cases involving detention between 1989 and 1991 fell from 28,200 to 23,700 (a decline of 16%), drug cases involving detention between 1991 and 1993 climbed to 27,300 in 1993 (an increase of 15%).

The probability of detention for delinquency cases changed somewhat between 1989 and 1993 (Table 8). The use of detention decreased slightly for cases involving male drug offenders (from 38% to 32%), and for cases involving males charged with person offenses (from 27% to 25%). Detention involving females dropped slightly for all cases, except property offenses, which remained at 12%. The

**Table 4: Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Sex, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.
<b>Male</b>	984,200	1,192,300	21%	75.7	85.2	13%
Person	167,200	248,300	49	12.9	17.8	38
Property	576,200	647,900	12	44.3	46.3	5
Drugs	67,100	78,100	16	5.2	5.6	8
Public Order	173,800	217,900	25	13.4	15.6	17
<b>Female</b>	227,600	297,400	31%	18.4	22.4	21%
Person	41,900	70,400	68	3.4	5.3	56
Property	128,900	161,000	25	10.4	12.1	16
Drugs	10,900	11,000	1	0.9	0.8	-6
Public Order	46,000	54,900	19	3.7	4.1	11

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

**Table 5: Percent Change in Delinquency Cases and Case Rates by Race, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.
<b>White</b>	816,300	962,100	18%	40.0	44.1	10%
Person	116,400	181,400	56	5.7	8.3	46
Property	501,600	555,900	11	24.6	25.5	4
Drugs	44,900	50,400	12	2.2	2.3	5
Public Order	153,400	174,400	14	7.5	8.0	6
<b>Black</b>	354,000	472,700	34%	92.8	115.4	24%
Person	86,100	127,700	48	22.6	31.2	38
Property	177,300	218,700	23	46.5	53.4	15
Drugs	31,500	36,600	16	8.3	8.9	8
Public Order	59,000	89,700	52	15.5	21.9	42
<b>Other Races</b>	41,600	54,800	32%	36.8	39.9	8%
Person	6,500	9,600	48	5.7	7.0	22
Property	26,200	34,300	31	23.1	25.0	8
Drugs	1,500	2,100	36	1.4	1.5	12
Public Order	7,400	8,800	18	6.6	6.4	-3

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

overall probability of detention, however, was relatively unchanged between 1989 and 1993—declining to 16% from 17% for cases involving females and remaining at 22% for cases involving males.

In 1993 the likelihood of detention in cases involving white juveniles was 17%,

while it was 28% for those involving black juveniles, and 22% for juveniles of other races (Table 9). For white juveniles, the percent of delinquency cases involving detention fell between 1989 and 1993 in all offense categories. The overall probability of detention for cases involving black

**Table 6: Percent of Delinquency Cases Referred by Law Enforcement, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	83%	86%
Person	81	86
Property	90	91
Drugs	92	94
Public Order	60	70

youth remained unchanged at 28% in both 1989 and 1993. However, the use of detention declined for cases involving black youth charged with either person offenses or drug offenses. Detention was also less likely for cases involving youth of other races, falling from 26% in 1989 to 22% in 1993.

### Case Processing

When a delinquency case is referred to juvenile court, an intake officer, judge, or prosecutor determines whether to handle the case formally or informally. Formal handling involves the filing of a petition requesting that the court hold an adjudicatory or waiver hearing. Informal case

handling is conducted entirely at the juvenile court intake level, without a petition and without an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.

In 1993 more than half of all delinquency cases were handled formally (Figure 2). Continuing a trend seen in recent years, formal processing for delinquency referrals increased between 1989 and 1993, from 50% to 53%. The increased number of cases referred to juvenile court intake and the greater likelihood of formal handling has resulted in a 29% increase between 1989 and 1993 in the number of petitioned delinquency cases disposed by U.S. juvenile courts (Table 10). The largest percentage increase was in the number of petitioned person offense cases, which increased 58% from 1989 to 1993. The number of petitioned property offense cases increased 19%, petitioned drug cases increased 15%, and petitioned public order offense cases climbed 37%.

**Criminal Court Transfer.** One of the first actions taken during juvenile court intake is determining whether a case should be processed in the adult, criminal justice system rather than in the juvenile court. The mechanisms used to transfer a case from juvenile to criminal court vary by State. In some States, a prosecutor may file juvenile cases that meet certain criteria directly in criminal court. In other States, a juvenile court judge must authorize all transfers by waiving the juvenile court's jurisdiction over the case. This Bulletin analyzes only those cases transferred to criminal court by judicial waiver.

The number of juvenile court cases transferred to criminal court grew 10% between 1992 and 1993. The number of 1993 transfers increased 41% from those in 1989 (Table 11). For the first time in recent years, the largest group of transferred cases involved person offenses (robbery, assault, etc.). Offenses against persons accounted for more than two in five cases transferred in 1993. Between 1989 and 1993, the number of transferred person offense cases increased far more (115%) than did transfers of any other type of case (for example, 75% among public order cases and 12% among property offense cases).

Transfers to criminal court represented 1.5% of all petitioned delinquency cases in 1993, compared with 1.4% in 1989 (Table 12). In 1989, the cases most likely to be transferred were those involving drug offenses (2.8%). In 1993, however, person offense cases were more likely to be

**Table 7: Percent Change in Detained Delinquency Cases, 1989-1993**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1989	1993	
<b>Delinquency</b>	256,300	303,800	19%
Person	52,700	75,100	42
Property	118,300	134,400	14
Drugs	28,200	27,300	-3
Public Order	57,100	67,000	17

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

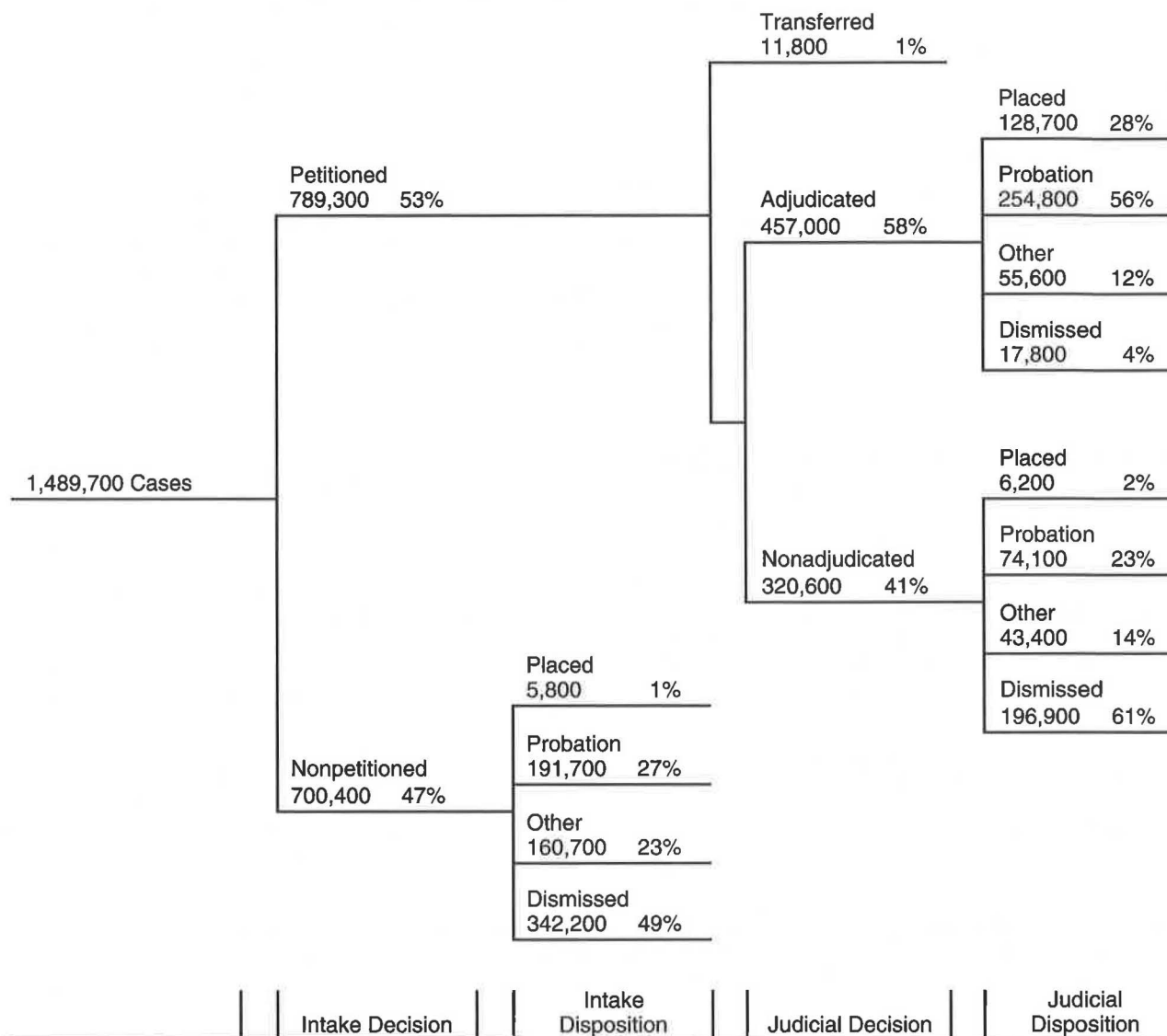
**Table 8: Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Sex, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	21%	20%
Person	25	24
Property	17	17
Drugs	36	31
Public Order	26	25
<b>Male</b>	22%	22%
Person	27	25
Property	18	18
Drugs	38	32
Public Order	26	25
<b>Female</b>	17%	16%
Person	19	17
Property	12	12
Drugs	27	23
Public Order	25	23

**Table 9: Percent of Delinquency Cases Detained by Race, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>White</b>	18%	17%
Person	22	20
Property	15	14
Drugs	22	20
Public Order	24	21
<b>Black</b>	28%	28%
Person	30	28
Property	22	23
Drugs	56	46
Public Order	30	31
<b>Other Races</b>	26%	22%
Person	31	29
Property	24	19
Drugs	30	20
Public Order	30	24

**Figure 2: Juvenile Court Processing of Delinquency Cases, 1993**



Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

transferred than were drug cases (2.7% versus 2.2%). Just 1.1% of cases involving property offenses were transferred to criminal court in 1993.

The offense profile of delinquency cases transferred to criminal court changed considerably between 1989 and 1993. Of all transferred cases, person offense cases increased from 28% to 42%, while property offense cases declined from 49% to 38% (Figure 3). Drug cases also declined as a proportion of all transfers, from 16% in 1989 to 10% in 1993.

**Adjudication and Disposition.** Except in cases where a criminal-court transfer is

granted, an adjudicatory hearing is generally held in all formally petitioned delinquency cases.<sup>5</sup> During this hearing, the juvenile court determines whether the youth will be adjudicated a delinquent. The court then makes a dispositional decision that could include fines, restitution, probation, commitment to a residential facility, referral to another treatment program, or community service.

In 1993, 58% of all formally processed delinquency cases resulted in adjudication (Table 13). In 28% of these cases, the youth was placed out of the home in a residential facility (Table 14). More than

half (56%) of all formally adjudicated delinquency cases resulted in the juvenile being placed on formal probation (Table 15). In 12% of formally adjudicated delinquency cases, the court ordered the juvenile to pay restitution or a fine, participate in some form of community service, or enter a treatment or counseling program—dispositions with minimal continuing supervision by probation staff. In a small number of cases (4%), the juvenile was adjudicated but the case was then dismissed or the youth was otherwise released.

In 1993, two in five formally handled delinquency cases were not subsequently adjudicated. Most (61%) of these cases were dismissed by the court, but in 23% of the cases the juvenile agreed to some form of probation. Approximately 2% of all nonadjudicated delinquency cases resulted in voluntary out-of-home placement. In 14% of nonadjudicated cases, the juvenile agreed to another informal disposition such as restitution, community service, or referral to an agency for services.

## Petitioned Status Offense Cases

Status offenses are acts for which only juveniles can be arrested. In other words, a status offense is an otherwise legal act that is considered illegal only because of the juvenile *status* of the person committing the act. The four major status offense categories analyzed here are runaway, truancy, ungovernability (sometimes known as incorrigibility, or being beyond the control of one's parents), and liquor law violations (minor in possession of alcohol, underage drinking, etc.).

## Number of Cases

In 1993 U.S. juvenile courts petitioned and formally disposed an estimated 111,200 status offense cases (Table 16).<sup>6</sup> In 33,900 (or 30%) of these cases, the most serious charge was truancy. A liquor law violation was the most serious charge in another 26,100 cases (24%), ungovernability in 15,700 cases (14%), and runaway in 20,100 cases (18%). Other miscellaneous status offenses (such as curfew violations) accounted for the remaining 15,400 cases (14%).<sup>7</sup>

## Case Rates

The Nation's juvenile courts processed 4.1 petitioned status offense cases for every 1,000 youth at risk of referral in 1993. The total status offense case rate was 28% higher in 1993 than in 1989. The rate for runaway cases increased 36%, the truancy rate increased 38%, the rate of ungovernability cases grew 16%, and the rate of status liquor law violations increased 2%. The rate of "miscellaneous" status offense cases climbed 79% between 1989 and 1993, due in part to the inclusion of curfew violations in this category.

## Age of Youth

In 1993, 60% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed by juvenile courts involved a youth under age 16, compared

**Table 10: Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1989	1993	
<b>Delinquency</b>	610,600	789,300	29%
Person	115,300	181,800	58
Property	337,900	402,300	19
Drugs	47,900	55,000	15
Public Order	109,400	150,200	37

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

**Table 11: Percent Change in Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1989	1993	
<b>Delinquency</b>	8,300	11,800	41%
Person	2,300	5,000	115
Property	4,100	4,500	12
Drugs	1,400	1,200	-11
Public Order	600	1,000	75

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

**Table 12: Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	1.4%	1.5%
Person	2.0	2.7
Property	1.2	1.1
Drugs	2.8	2.2
Public Order	0.5	0.7

**Table 13: Percent of Petitioned Delinquency Cases Adjudicated, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	63%	58%
Person	57	54
Property	64	58
Drugs	67	59
Public Order	65	61

**Table 14: Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed Out of Home, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	30%	28%
Person	33	31
Property	26	25
Drugs	36	30
Public Order	39	34

**Table 15: Percent of Adjudicated Delinquency Cases Placed on Formal Probation, 1989 and 1993**

Offense	1989	1993
<b>Delinquency</b>	57%	56%
Person	56	55
Property	59	58
Drugs	55	54
Public Order	51	51



with 58% of the 1989 caseload. The most common status offense for youth under age 16 was truancy (40%). Among older youth the most common status offense was a liquor law violation, which accounted for 44% of all cases involving a youth age 16 or older (Table 17).

### Gender of Youth

Male juveniles were involved in 57% of the petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts during 1993. More than two in three liquor law violation cases involved males (70%). On the other hand, the majority of runaway cases involved females (63%). Males and females were more equally represented in truancy and ungovernability cases. In 1993, 54% of both truancy cases and ungovernability cases involved male juveniles.

### Race of Youth

White youth were involved in 75% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed by juvenile courts during 1993. White youth were involved in 75% of runaway cases, 71% of truancy cases, 71% of ungovernability cases, and 87% of status liquor law violation cases. Truancy was the most common status offense for white youth (29%) as well as black youth (38%), while liquor law violations were the most common status offenses for cases of youth of other races (38%).

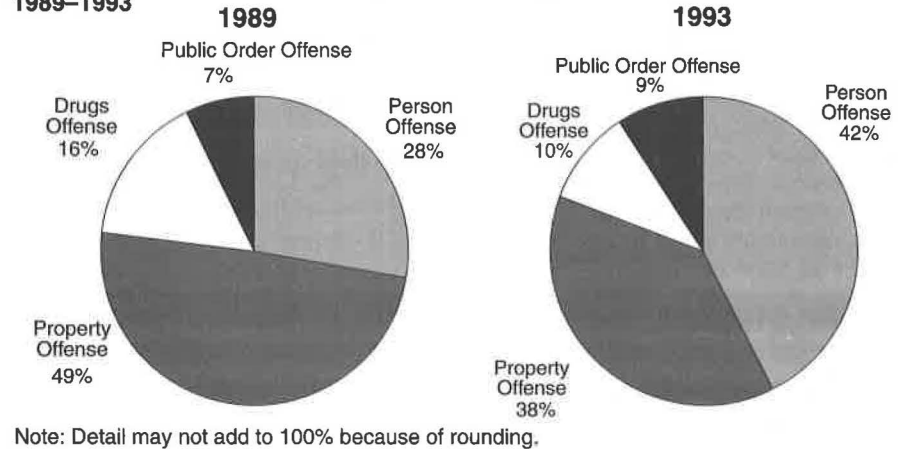
### Source of Referral

Law enforcement agencies referred 40% of the petitioned status offense cases handled by juvenile courts in 1993. However, the source of referral varied according to the offense involved. Law enforcement agencies referred 92% of status liquor law violation cases, 40% of runaway cases, 13% of truancy cases, and 10% of ungovernability cases.

### Use of Detention

Detention was used in 8,400 petitioned status offense cases in 1993 (Table 18). Between 1989 and 1993 the number of status offense cases involving detention grew 29%. This growth in the use of detention was seen in all offense categories, but it was most marked in cases involving "miscellaneous" status offenses, which climbed 153%. Runaway cases were the most likely to involve detention in 1993. Detention was used in 16% of runaway cases, 7% of ungovernability cases, 5% of status liquor law violations, and 2% of truancy cases. Of the estimated 8,400 petitioned status offense cases that

**Figure 3: Offense Profile of Delinquency Cases Transferred to Criminal Court, 1989-1993**



**Table 16: Percent Change in Petitioned Status Offense Cases and Case Rates, 1989-1993**

Offense	Number of Cases			Case Rates		
	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.	1989	1993	Pct. Chg.
<b>Status Offense</b>	81,000	111,200	37%	3.2	4.1	28%
Runaway	13,700	20,100	47	0.5	0.7	36
Truancy	22,800	33,900	49	0.9	1.2	38
Ungovernability	12,600	15,700	24	0.5	0.6	16
Liquor law violation	23,900	26,100	9	0.9	1.0	2
Miscellaneous	8,000	15,400	93	0.3	0.6	79

Case Rate = Cases per 1,000 youth at risk.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

involved detention in 1993, 37% were runaway cases, 16% were liquor law violation cases, 12% involved ungovernability charges, 7% involved charges of truancy, and 27% involved miscellaneous status offenses.

### Case Processing

During 1993, 54% of the petitioned status offense cases disposed resulted in adjudication (Figure 4). Adjudication was most likely in cases involving ungovernability and truancy (56% of both categories) and least likely in runaway cases (48%). Probation was the most common disposition for adjudicated status offenders. Sixty percent of adjudicated status offense cases resulted in probation, 18% resulted in out-of-home placement, 19% resulted in other sanctions such as restitution or community service, and 3% were dismissed.

**Table 17: Offense Profile of Petitioned Status Offense Cases by Age at Referral, 1993**

Offense	Age 15 or Younger	Age 16 or Older
Runaway	20%	15%
Truancy	40	17
Ungovernability	17	10
Liquor law violation	10	44
Miscellaneous	13	15
Total	100%	100%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

**Table 18: Percent Change in Detained Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1989–1993**

Offense	Number of Cases		Percent Change
	1989	1993	
<b>Status Offense</b>	6,500	8,400	29%
Runaway	2,600	3,200	20
Truancy	500	600	13
Ungovernability	1,300	1,000	-18
Liquor law violation	1,200	1,400	13
Miscellaneous	900	2,300	153

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

17 years, but the age ranged from 15 to 17 years in 1993.

- Care should be exercised when interpreting age, sex, or racial differences in the handling of juvenile delinquency cases; reported statistics do not control for the seriousness of the behavior leading to each charge or the extent of a youth's court history.
- Nearly all youth of Hispanic ethnicity are included in the white racial category.

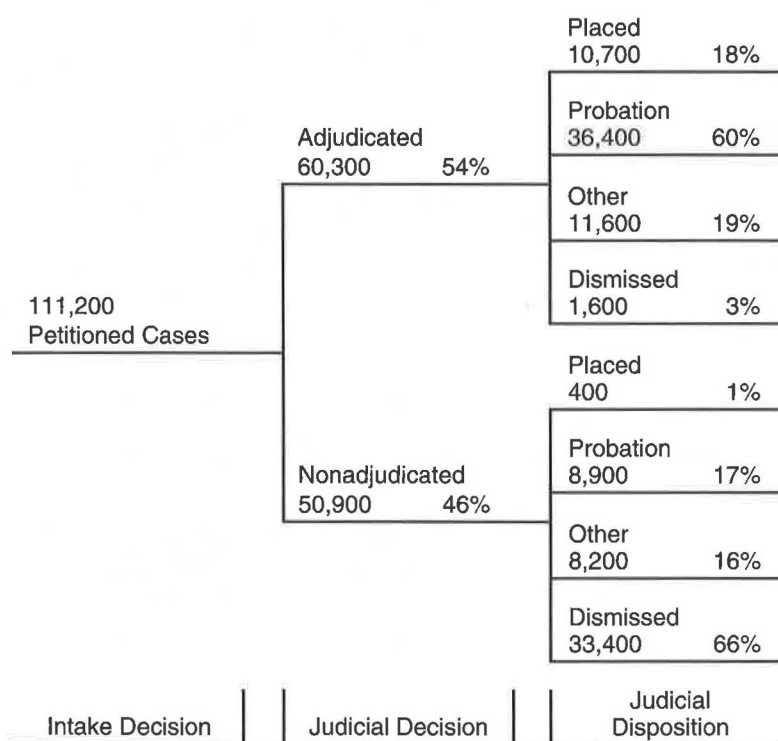
- In a small number of cases, the petition is withdrawn before an adjudicatory hearing is held.

- In many communities, social service agencies, rather than the juvenile courts, have assumed responsibility for screening and diverting alleged status offenders. Because of great differences in intake and screening procedures for informally handled status offense cases, national estimates are not calculated. The national estimates presented here and in *Juvenile Court Statistics* focus on formally handled, or petitioned, status offense cases. Readers interested in further information on informally handled status offense cases can review the subnational statistics presented in the *Detailed Supplement to Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*.

- Due to the heterogeneity of offenses contained in the "miscellaneous" category, these cases are not always discussed independently. All totals in the tables and figures, however, include "miscellaneous status offenses."

- Jeffrey A. Butts, Terrence A. Finnegan, Anne L. Aughenbaugh, Howard N. Snyder, and Rowen S. Poole (1995). *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

**Figure 4: Juvenile Court Processing of Petitioned Status Offense Cases, 1993**



Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

## Endnotes

- For information on the estimation procedure, see the "methods" section in this Bulletin or in *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*. The national estimates for 1989 through 1992 described in this Bulletin include revisions made after publication of previous *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports.

- The calculation of the population at risk of referral controls for State variations in the ages covered by juvenile court jurisdiction. Juveniles at risk are defined as youth age 10 or older who were at or under the upper age of original jurisdiction of the juvenile court according to the laws of their State. In most States, the upper age of original jurisdiction is

## About the National Juvenile Court Data Archive

This Bulletin presents information from the latest *Juvenile Court Statistics* report. The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series started in 1929 and continues to be the primary source of information on the activities of the Nation's juvenile courts. The data for this report are collected, analyzed, and stored by the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is operated by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Archive collects demographic, legal, and dispositional data on more than 700,000 delinquency and status offense cases annually, thus offering the most detailed information available on youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system nationwide. In addition to producing the *Juvenile Court Statistics* reports and other topical publications, the Archive can provide data files and special data analyses for research and policy purposes.

The Archive's national delinquency estimates are also available to researchers in an easy-to-use software package, *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1989-1993*. With the support of the

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, NCJJ has developed this package to facilitate independent analysis of Archive data while eliminating the need for statistical analysis software. All necessary data files as well as the NCJJ software are available on a single 3-inch diskette that may be installed on an IBM-compatible personal computer or network. To order a complimentary copy of *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics 1989-1993*, contact NCJJ, 412-227-6950.

For further information about the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, contact:

National Center for Juvenile Justice  
710 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-3000  
412-227-6950

To obtain *Juvenile Court Statistics*, other publications using Archive data, or OJJDP publications that focus on juvenile justice statistics, contact:

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse  
Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
800-638-8736

## Related Readings

*Female Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System*, June 1996, NCJ 160941.

*Growth in Minority Detentions Attributed to Drug Law Violators*, March 1990, NCJ 122011.

*How Juveniles Get to Criminal Court*, October 1994, NCJ 150309.

*Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report*, August 1995, NCJ 153569.

*Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence*, May 1996, NCJ 159107.

*Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1992*, October 1994, NCJ 150039.

*Restitution and Juvenile Recidivism*, September 1992, NCJ 137774.

*Study Sheds New Light on Court Careers of Juvenile Offenders*, August 1988, NCJ 113460.

*The Juvenile Court's Response to Violent Offenders: 1985-1989*, April 1993, NCJ 139558.

## Methods

The *Juvenile Court Statistics* series uses data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Data are provided to the Archive by State and local agencies responsible for the collection and/or dissemination of juvenile justice data. The information contributed to the Archive by these agencies is not derived from a probability sampling procedure, nor is it the result of a uniform data collection effort. The national estimates described in this Bulletin and in *Juvenile Court Statistics* are developed using information from all courts able to provide compatible data to the Archive. While juvenile courts with jurisdiction over 96% of the U.S. juvenile population contributed at least some 1993 data to the Archive, not all information could be used to generate the national estimates because of incompatibilities in the structure or content of the data files.

Data are provided to the Archive in two forms—automated *case-level* data and *court-level aggregate* data. Automated case-level data, which describe each case's demographic and processing characteristics, were provided by 1,375 jurisdictions in 26 States (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). Together, the contributing jurisdictions from these States contained 49% of the Nation's juvenile population and handled 689,505 delinquency cases in 1993.

Court-level aggregate data, which usually indicate the number of delinquency cases disposed in a calendar year, were provided by 443 jurisdictions in 5 States (Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Vermont, and Washington) and the District of Columbia.

In 1993 these jurisdictions handled 207,997 delinquency cases. In all, compatible data were provided to the Archive by 1,818 jurisdictions in 1993, containing 67% of the Nation's juvenile population (i.e., youth age 10 through the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction in each State).

The national estimates of juvenile court cases reported in *Juvenile Court Statistics* were developed using the Archive's case-level and court-level data files and county-level juvenile population estimates (controlling for the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction in each State). The basic assumption underlying the estimation procedure is that the volume and characteristics of juvenile court cases are shaped by the same set of factors in reporting and nonreporting jurisdictions of similar size. For interested readers, a complete description of the estimation procedure appears in the methods section of each *Juvenile Court Statistics* report.

## Glossary

**Adjudication:** Judicial determination (judgment) that a youth is a delinquent or status offender.

**Age:** Juvenile's age at the time the case was referred to juvenile court.

**Case Rate:** Number of cases disposed per 1,000 youth at risk. The population base used to calculate the case rate varies. For example, the population base for the male case rate is the total number of male youth age 10 or older who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts. (See *Youth Population at Risk*.)

**Delinquent Act:** An act committed by a juvenile for which an adult could be prosecuted in a criminal court, but when committed by a juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order when such acts are committed by juveniles.

**Detention:** The placement of a youth in a restrictive facility between the time of referral to court intake and case disposition.

**Disposition:** Definite action taken or treatment plan decided upon or initiated in a particular case. Case dispositions are coded into the following categories:

- **Transfer to Criminal Court:** Cases that were sent to a criminal court as the result of a waiver or transfer hearing in the juvenile court.
- **Placement:** Cases in which youth were placed out of the home in a residential facility for delinquents or status offenders or cases in which youth were removed from their homes and placed elsewhere.
- **Probation:** Cases in which youth were placed on informal/voluntary or formal/court-ordered probation or supervision.
- **Dismissed:** Cases dismissed, including those warned, counseled, and released, with no further disposition anticipated. Among cases handled informally, some may be dismissed by the juvenile court because the matter is being handled in criminal court (see *Manner of Handling*).

- **Other:** Miscellaneous dispositions not included above, which may include fines, restitution, community service, referrals outside the court for services with minimal or no further court involvement anticipated, and dispositions coded as "other" in a jurisdiction's original data.

**Juvenile:** Youth at or below the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction. (See *Upper Age of Jurisdiction* and *Youth Population at Risk*.)

**Juvenile Court:** Any court that has jurisdiction over matters involving juveniles.

**Manner of Handling:** A general classification of case processing within the court system.

- **Petitioned:** Formally handled cases that appear on the official court calendar in response to the filing of a petition or other legal instrument requesting the court to adjudicate the youth a delinquent, a status offender, or a dependent child or to transfer the youth to criminal court for processing as an adult.
- **Nonpetitioned:** Informally handled cases in which duly authorized court personnel screen for adjustment before the filing of a formal petition. Such personnel include judges, referees, probation officers, other officers of the court, and/or an agency statutorily designated to conduct petition screening for the juvenile court.

**Petition:** A document filed in juvenile court alleging that a juvenile is a delinquent or a status offender and asking that the court assume jurisdiction over the juvenile or asking that an alleged delinquent be transferred to criminal court for prosecution as an adult.

**Race:** The race of the youth referred as determined by the youth or by court personnel.

- **White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East. (In both the population and court data, nearly all Hispanics were included in the white racial category.)
- **Black:** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Other:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America,

the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.

**Unit of Count:** The unit of count is a case disposed by a court with juvenile jurisdiction during the calendar year. Each case represents a youth referred to the juvenile court for a new referral for one or more offenses. The term "disposed" means that during the year some definite action was taken or some treatment plan was decided upon or initiated. Within this definition, it is possible for a youth to be involved in more than one case during a calendar year.

### Upper Age of Original Jurisdiction:

The oldest age at which a juvenile court has original jurisdiction over an individual for law-violating behavior. For the time period covered by *Juvenile Court Statistics 1993*, the upper age of jurisdiction was 15 in three States (Connecticut, New York, and North Carolina), and 16 in eight States (Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas). In the remaining 39 States and the District of Columbia, the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction was 17. It must be noted that in most States, there are exceptions in which youth at or below the State's upper age of jurisdiction can be placed under the original jurisdiction of the adult criminal court. For example, in most States if a youth of a certain age is charged with an offense from a defined list of "excluded offenses," the case must originate in the adult criminal court. In addition, in a number of States, the district attorney is given the discretion of filing certain cases either in the juvenile or in the criminal court. Therefore, while the upper age of jurisdiction is commonly recognized in all States, there are numerous exceptions to this age criterion.

**Youth Population at Risk:** For delinquency and status offense matters, this term refers to the number of children from age 10 through the upper age of original jurisdiction. In all States the upper age of jurisdiction is defined by statute. Because most States consider individuals to be adults on their 18th birthday, the delinquency and status offense youth population at risk in these States equals the number of children 10 through 17 years of age living within the geographical area serviced by the court. (See *Upper Age of Original Jurisdiction*.)





## Acknowledgments

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*The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.*

*Juvenile Court Statistics 1993* is available online through the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse. Call 800-638-8736 for information, or e-mail [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org).

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